

# College Cohorts: Buying Classes, Opening Doors



*“This is pretty much a dream come true. It changed my life, and I mean that from my heart.”*

Ronald Cabuag is part of the WDC’s first purchased cohort, a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) training which started in June 2009 at South Seattle Community College.

After two years of prerequisites, Ron was struggling to get into an LPN class. Because these classes are so expensive for colleges to offer, waiting lists are long and only the best students make it in. On top of that, Ron didn’t know if he could afford school on his salary as a dialysis technician.

Before the new class was added, Ron was discouraged. He was visiting family in Guam “devastated” and wondering about his future. Then he got the call that he was in. “I said ‘sign me up!’” he says.

On June 22, 2010, Ron received his nurse’s pin and later earned his LPN license. From “just barely making it” on \$15 an hour, Ron is earning \$22 an hour as an LPN and will soon start training to be an RN.

Thanks to Recovery Act and state matching funds, the WDC is directly purchasing classes at local community and technical colleges.

The result: Cohorts have been opened for more than 280 students in high-demand programs that train them for good jobs that employers need to fill.

A cohort is a series of classes for a single group of students. The WDC is spending \$1.9 million for 14 cohort classes at seven local colleges, including \$568,000 in matching state funds. All lead to a certificate needed in the job market.

Occupations include:

- Health care (nursing, medical coding)
- Accounting
- Computer engineering
- Project management

## How does the WDC add value?

The WDC funds cohorts that are needed to **fill a gap**—in other words, training for occupations that are in demand, for which there are eager students and not enough classes already.

The WDC then works with the college to **customize the courses** to save students time and ensure that courses lead directly to certificates. Students also can take advantage of **tutoring, career counseling and support** services such as transportation that are not available to other college students.

The WDC-funded cohorts are highly effective, with a **student retention rate of 87%**. Of the 161 students who have finished and gained jobs, the average wage is \$21.

### ***Our college partners:***

- South Seattle Community College
- North Seattle Community College
- Renton Technical College
- Bellevue College
- Highline Community College
- Green River Community College
- Seattle Vocational Institute